

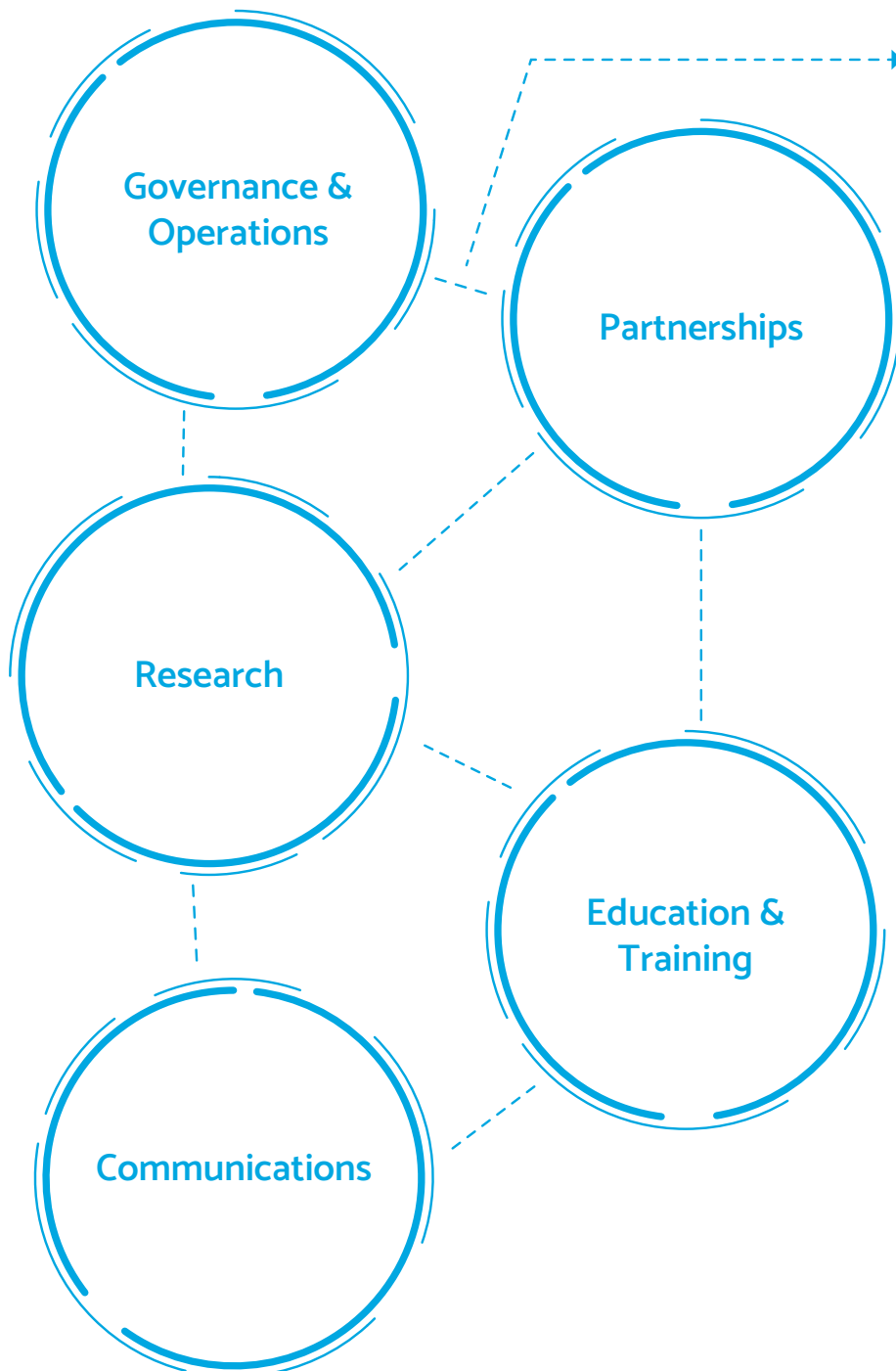
# ICHR Strategic Plan

2015–2020

## Introduction

Ten years has passed since the founding of the Institute for Circumpolar Health Research (ICHR). This marks an occasion for reflection, but also an opportunity for thinking about the future of the ICHR. The Board of Directors as well as the Executive & Scientific Director have drafted a strategic plan. Input on planning for the ICHR extends well beyond the Institute's formal governance arrangements – the success of the Institute has been built on partnership.

## Our strategic direction for the next five years is organized around five key themes:



These five themes build upon the vision and objectives of the ICHR, as articulated in our constitution.

### Vision

Building on the strengths and knowledge of all cultures to achieve health.

### Objectives

- 1 To conduct and facilitate ethical and rigorous research, which will be used to improve the health and wellness, and reduce health disparities, for northern residents;
- 2 To synthesize, disseminate and facilitate the exchange of knowledge with decision-makers in the Canadian North and researchers across Canada relevant to health issues and priorities for circumpolar populations and opportunities to improve health care and health system performance in circumpolar regions; and
- 3 To conduct training and educate northern stakeholders and research partners across Canada on health research methodologies.

## Strategic Direction

### Governance & Operations

There is a need to renew the governance of the ICHR. After ten years, we have a better understanding of the best contributions that can be made by the board, university affiliates, and our partners. With this in mind, a formal governance review was conducted in the fall of 2014. The ICHR has also taken steps to further professionalize its operations by developing an expanded suite of policies to govern human resource management, financial management, and risk management. Moreover, recent agreements with the University of Toronto and University of Alberta have enhanced the operational flexibility of the Institute. The following strategic directions build upon these recent developments.

| Strategic Directions   | Why  | Who  | When      |
|--|--|--|-----------|
| <b>Review and revise the governance section of the ICHR bylaws.</b>  | To ensure board composition that will provide oversight, accountability, and strategic direction.  | Board of Directors   | 2016      |
| <b>Continue to expand the policy suite to operationalize requirements for governance and implementation in small and remote settings, and the modern administration of a scientific institution.</b> | To ensure a clear set of policies are available to guide operations when and where the policies of other parties are inapplicable or unavailable.  | ICHR staff with approval by Board of Directors               | Ongoing   |
| <b>Ensure fiscal sustainability by leveraging intellectual assets through a revenue-generating social enterprise.</b>  | Funding for research frequently is not permitted to be spent on core operations such as staff, office space, and administration.   | Executive & Scientific Director, plus staff where applicable | 2016-2017 |
| <b>Invest partial revenues from social enterprise in support for administrative management and communications.</b>   | There is a need to decrease the administrative burden on the Executive & Scientific Director as well as to improve the frequency and completeness of communications about ICHR activities and outputs. | Board of Directors   | 2017      |
| <b>Establish procedures in line with upholding requirements of health research ethics board.</b>   | Improve accessibility and applicability of health research ethics reviews  | Executive & Scientific Director                              | 2016-2017 |

## Partnerships

The success of the ICHR is built on partnerships. Our strength has come from partnerships with Indigenous governments and organizations, universities and other institutions of higher learning, as well as independent research bodies with an interest in scientific research and circumpolar health.

The ICHR fills a well-defined space by facilitating the linkage between local health and global trends. We understand and demonstrate the fit between rural and remote circumpolar communities, indigenous-led multi-cultural regions, the direct effects of climate change, the stresses of rapid resource development, multi-level governance, and fiscal constraint. Understanding these linkages, we provide a scientific interface to solve collective problems.

We do this as northern peoples based in the circumpolar region.

| Strategic Directions  | Why   | Who   | When      |
|---|---|---|-----------|
| <b>Build opportunities for additional faculty, students, and researchers.</b>                           | Enhance capacity for northern based research that addresses health and systems challenges in circumpolar regions. | University of Toronto and University of Alberta | 2016-2017 |
| <b>Expand the use of traditional knowledge and traditional understanding among student and faculty.</b> | Enhance holistic perspectives on health and system responsiveness   | Northern Elders and Elders councils             | 2016-2017 |

## Research

Circumpolar regions are currently under a number of overlapping pressures resulting in a variety of health disparities. We recognize a need for multidisciplinary research that focuses on broader understandings of wellness, the complexities underlying disparities, and the interconnectedness of health with other sectors (education, language, environment).

Multidisciplinary approaches to research are required and Indigenous knowledge is critical to solving collective problems. We promote circumpolar research built on Indigenous values, traditions and methods. This naturally embraces approaches that engage youth and elders.

Health systems research and performance measurement is a priority area for circumpolar research. The shared context of circumpolar health systems and political affiliations makes for informative international comparisons. As with our partnerships, our research agenda is derived from a linkage between the local and global in circumpolar health.

| Strategic Directions   | Why   | Who  | When    |
|--|---|--|---------|
| <b>Continue research program centred upon circumpolar health policy and systems design.</b>              | Build knowledge bases with applications for decision making and enhanced systems performance in circumpolar regions | Circumpolar research partners  | Ongoing |
| <b>Engage research advisors with traditional knowledge.</b>  | Expand knowledge base and relevancy of research.  | Traditional knowledge holders as project co-investigators from circumpolar nations, Elders advisors as designated. | Ongoing |
| <b>Focus on health systems research and the priorities identified by circumpolar Indigenous peoples.</b> | Health disparities and lack of system responsiveness is present in selected circumpolar populations.                | Traditional knowledge holders and elders councils.   | Ongoing |

## Research (continued)

| Strategic Directions  | Why   | Who  | When      |
|---|---|--|-----------|
| <b>Collaborate on northern data management systems.</b>                                 | To expand baseline data on areas of significance to northern and Indigenous health research.                  | Dene Nation, CHARS, Statistics Canada, SPOR support unit, Department of Health and Social Services, Health Authorities, Canadian Primary Care Sentinel Surveillance Network and Queen's University | 2016-2017 |
| <b>Participate in international networks to collect, organize and disseminate data.</b> | To support a circumpolar repository of data and enhance international comparisons and research collaborations | Circumpolar data repositories, statistical, policy and traditional knowledge based resources.  | Ongoing   |

## Education and Training

The ICHR – with its facilities, libraries, data access, multi-media and learning environment – is an attractive northern base for research and study.

Opportunities for Masters and PhD level placements are possible. Advanced degrees could be pursued on-site, with flexibility to move between northern institutes and southern universities. In addition to degree programs, there could be benefits in developing skills training programs catered to northern-based health sector needs. In Health informatics, quality improvement, public health, and health policy and public administration.

| Strategic Directions  | Why  | Who  | When    |
|---|--|--|---------|
| <b>Supervise graduate students.</b>   | Enhance cohort of researchers with understanding in circumpolar health.  | Students at University of Toronto and University of Alberta.   | Ongoing |
| <b>Provide summer placements for students in community-based public health and health systems initiatives.</b>                              | Provide opportunities for northern residents and university students to be based in the north at ICHR and gain work experience in research and policy sector.  | Students at University of Toronto, and University of Alberta. Northern residents registered at colleges or universities. | Ongoing |
| <b>Expose students to mixed-methods research combining academic and traditional approaches.</b>   | Students come from academic and traditional knowledge backgrounds and have interest in learning advanced quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods that build on academic and traditional knowledge approaches in research. ICHR has expertise in this area that is complementary to Universities. | Students at University of Toronto, University of Alberta. Northern residents registered at colleges or universities.     | Ongoing |
| <b>Create opportunities for northern student visiting placements in circumpolar universities and research institutes outside of Canada.</b> | Develop partnerships and enhance knowledge sharing and international research collaborations through circumpolar educational networks.   | Circumpolar universities as per agreements.  | 2016    |



## Communications

With the large dispersed population in circumpolar regions and international context, effective communications of ICHR activities and research findings are of utmost important. There is also a need to share evidence base with decision makers and community stakeholders. These communications highlight activities in circumpolar health research and sharing relevant findings.

| Strategic Directions   | Why   | Who   | When    |
|--|---|---|---------|
| <b>Communicate ICHR activities and outputs with an active website, social media, and periodic reporting built on a communications strategy – potentially in partnership with other agencies.</b> | Promote evidence base being generated in circumpolar health       | Executive & Scientific Director                     | 2016    |
| <b>Protect and promote the brand of the ICHR.</b>  | Highlight unique contributions of ICHR .                          | Board of Directors, Executive & Scientific Director | Ongoing |
| <b>Translate northern research priorities to global research community and circumpolar research results to local communities.</b>  | Enhance international comparisons and promotion of best practices | Executive & Scientific Director                     | Ongoing |